

CHAPTER – VI

GANDHIJI'S PROPHETIC VISION ON JOURNALISM

Mahatma Gandhi was an embodiment of all human virtues and the world looked up to him for guidance in every crisis. He was simple, truthful, selfless and worked to shape a social order free from exploitation. So the world would need Gandhiji for centuries to come. Here we are constrained to confine the discussion to Gandhiji's journalistic experiments. The values and ideals advocated by him are no less relevant today. They are most likely to attain new dimensions to suit the needs of a changing world but they will endure as long as man continues to dream of an ideal world justice combined with love and compassion reigns supreme.

Watsonian behaviourism of 1912 underwent a change as a result of experimentation of neo behaviourists like Thorndike, Guthrie, Skinner and Hull, Psychoanalysis of Freud resulted in neo-freudian thought after the contributions of Eric Burn, Thomas Harris, Eric Fromm, Anna Freud and Ronald Laying Classical gestalt theory of Koffka, Kohler and Werthemir got a new form, thanks to the contributions of neo-journalists like Kurt Lewin and Tolman. Dalton Atomic Theory got modified and gave way to modern atomic theory owing to Avogadro's Hypothesis. It seems that Gandhian thought too is undergoing such a metamorphosis and the classical Gandhian thought is developing into a neo Gandhian thought at the global level, especially in the field of journalism. At the social level Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Jayaprakash Narayan, Baba Amte... etc., have been the torch-bearers of Gandhian ideology. Such a development in journalism is not only welcome but also inevitable.

When Gandhi did his journalistic experiments India had been under colonial rule for four and a half centuries. Economy, culture,

art, business, judiciary, administration and philosophies were all shaped on imported theories. Now we have been free for 63 years. The problems such as population explosion, environmental destruction and social discrimination still continue to impede natural progress and prosperity. Here lies the relevance of Gandhiji's prophetic voice. We could not attain the fruits of independence fully because of the aforesaid problems. So we need a 'second independence struggle'. There Gandhi could lead us invisibly and indirectly. Journals and journalists have the responsibility to stay a leading role in this struggle. Gandhi has showed us that 'media is the message'. It is necessary to evaluate Mahatma Gandhi in a holistic manner, the way he himself saw Vinoba. Those who uncritically followed Gandhiji years ago feel unhappy perhaps because they might be unable to understand the new context and the needs and situations of the hour and the ways and means to meet them.

How did Gandhi attain this journalistic height? It was mainly due to the harmony in his thought, word and action. The complete transparency in his revolutionary way of life was steeped in the principle of satyagraha. We have made divisions of morality as well as of life doing great injustice his legacy. At least now Gandhiji's Philosophy of life should awaken us and goad us to work for the common good. Gandhiji's contribution to numerous spheres of life is so great that it is not possible for us to talk about him without reverence.¹

The main characteristics of Indian culture are simplicity perseverance, patience, frugality and otherworldliness. But the westerners are enterprising, impatient, engrossed in multiplying their material wants and in satisfying them. Gandhi could synchronize the virtues of these two streams of culture. This is why Gandhi got so many followers both in the east and in the west. Gandhi is

internationally known as a pacifist, activist, revolutionary, saint, shrewd politician, non conformist etc. All these appellations while expressing the depth and breadth of his multifaceted personality perhaps overshadow the title – a great journalist. Gandhi attain this title without competition, anger, violence or hatred. So Albert Einstein exclaimed that “Generations to come it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.”²

As Girilal Jain rightly pointed out, “News and views now tend to seen as editorial material thrown in between advertisements as if to break the monotony and to hook on the reader. This cannot but affect adversely the status of journalists, however exalted a view they may have of their calling and role.”³ In India we are far behind the so called countries in this regard. But again, the trend in that direction is obvious enough. So it is the right time for us to listen the voice of Mahatma Gandhi.

Article 1. About Misuse of the Forth Estate

Shri. C. Rajagopalachari once said, “I want you to look upon journalism as an art and not as an industry. Journalists are like painters and poets rather than factory workers. They are really creating the works of art... Whatever may be your difficulties, whatever your internal pains and travails, you must look upon what you produce as productive, creative art.”⁴ This is a good guideline against the misuse of the fourth estate. Today, the press is misused by so many people in so many ways.

The press is a corrective force, unfortunately today, it becomes a corruptive force. Media persons must aware of this. The privileges of the press are valuable. It is given by the public. So the primary responsibility of press persons is to serve the public. A good report

must help to correct a politician, a writer or even a judge. At the same time the press must always be ready to self criticism.

Directly or indirectly today many persons misuse the press. Planting news purposely with vested interests is one of such problems. To avoid this, journalists must strictly obey the principles and ethics of journalism. Check and cross-check the news items is an ultimate necessary. Accuracy and fairness of news is only attained through this pre-publication verification. Journalists must take caution against defamatory writings. Parameters of the right of the press to comment on acts and conduct of public officials must be strictly followed. The right of privacy of individuals must be respected. Newspaper should not pass on or elevate conjecture, speculation or comment as a statement of fact. All these categories should be distinctly identified.

In crime reporting, Newspapers should eschew suggestive guilt by association. They should not name or identify the family or relatives or associates of a person convicted or accused of a crime, when they are totally innocent and a reference to them is not relevant to the matter being reported. It is contrary to the norms of journalism for a paper to identify itself with and project or promote the case of any one party in the case of any controversy or dispute.

Gandhiji considered the premature publication of news indirectly obtained by means, not always straight, ought not to be the function of journalists. "I know that the newspaper said to be the greatest in the world makes it a boast to publish news which the keepers are most anxious often in the public interest to withhold for the time being..... I know that mine is a voice in wilderness, though I speak with the authority of an unbroken experience of practical journalism for over twenty years. Successful conducting of four weeklies can be regarded as such. I would warn fellow journalist against copying the English method of obtaining and publishing news.

Let them study my original method which was introduced long before I became a Mahatma and before I had acquired any status of importance in the public life of India.”⁵ Gandhi was against to increase tastes. As a product newspaper also addicts us to an extent. It was against to Gandhi’s approach. He said that if we are not addicted to tea, there will be more forests today. Birds and animals get more food. Journalism is also like this. Making addict to tastes is against to Gandhism. He always insisted on that journalists must show self-restraint responsibility.

Gandhi ignores the marketing side of the newspapers – both circulation wise and advertisement wise. So we cannot compare directly today’s journals with Gandhiji’s journals. Today’s media world is a world of business. Even then the principles put forward by Gandhiji is important. Today internet is used as newspapers for attaining news. Then also the basic principles of Gandhian journalism is important.

Gandhi was against to sensationalism as well as trivialisation of news. Today newspapers are doing both these as a regular practice. Simplifying a news item which is in serious nature is called trivialization. Some newspapers are not giving serious items. Even if they give them, it will be simplifying to increase readability. Gandhi had an openness to write and publish truth. He was against to all kinds of derailment in journalism. But when journalism become a business, the main aim become the selling out of the commodity. Newspaper becomes a consumeristic product in the consumeristic society. This is a derailment for newspapers.

Today journalism is a corrective science. There are so many trends which are desirable in this field. These positive trends must be promoted. They must also be acknowledged. At the same time some journalists are now deviating from the perspective and objectives of it.

Here the common reader become in between the devil and the deep sea. Here we got guidance from the Gandhian path. Before independence he was the most influential Indian journalist. He gave the examples of good journalism through four weeklies. He was in the field for sixty years. Today, Gandhi was no more; and so Gandhian journalism also.

(i) Giving False Information

Gandhi was utterly against giving false information through newspapers. In Gandhi's conception of journalism, there was no room for sensational scoops. He said, there are occasions when a journalist serves his profession best by his science'. Gandhi's commitment was for truth.⁶ Gandhi never wrote anything only for creating an impression and carefully avoided exaggeration. His aim was to serve truth, to educate people and to be useful to the country.

Gandhi was able to edit his journals in the midst of his other activities secures a miracle. Most of his articles, even those which made up his autobiography, were written during short intervals between two engagements; some were written in moving trains because it was more important for the manuscript to be dispatched from a particular station so that it was in Ahmedabad at the right time for printing. It was sometimes a race against time. One wonders how articles written by Gandhi in such circumstances could turnout to be at once so powerful and truthful. An American scholar, Philips Talbot, who stayed in the ashram at Sevagram for a few days in 1941. Describes the scene after lunch: Gandhi was lying on a mat, Kasturba was massaging his feet while he was dictating to Mahadev.

Extolling the qualities and expectations of an editor Gandhi was clear that even when a newspaper writes something that displeases the government, which is nonetheless true, the editor should not

apologise. He was categorical in stating that if a newspaper were to run into difficulties as a consequence of publishing truth it should rather close down than buckle. This he felt was a better service to the public. Gandhi knew that facts or what passes as facts was only impressions or estimates of things and estimates vary. Therefore we may get different versions of the same event. To him, journalism meant not to stock the public mind with wanted and unwanted impressions. Journalists have to use their discretion in what to report and when. Given the control in which there were attempts to muzzle the press, Gandhi believed in freedom of the press. This was a matter of giving expression to public opinion.

Gandhi lamented about journalism as a profession and he was disturbed by the practices of at least a few journalists of his time. He pointed out that in India 'whoever fails to find a better occupation takes to journalism provided he can scribble.' These observations he stated were based on his reading of certain language journals. He therefore, felt that editors had great responsibility and wanted them to confer in order to impose certain restraints on the profession. Gandhi brought the highest qualities of the profession and could boast of courage in the face of adversity, unswerving adherence to truth, pursuit of public causes, and objectivity in presentation. The journals of Gandhi were 'a mirror of his own life'. In the *Story of My Experiments with Truth*, he wrote, "Week after week I poured out my soul in its columns and expounded the principles and practice of satyagraha as I understood it. I cannot recall a word in these articles set down without thought or deliberation or a word of conscious exaggeration, or anything merely to please. Indeed, the journal became for me training in self-restraint and for friends a medium through which to keep in touch with my thoughts".

According to Mahatma Gandhi's assessment of the newspapers of his time the mode of functioning was not in any way helpful to his crusade. He found them commercial, afraid of the government and dishonest in reporting. His last word on the Indian newspapers came at a prayer meeting in Delhi on June 19, 1946. He said: "If I were appointed dictator for a day in the place of the viceroy, I would stop all newspapers". He paused and added with a mischievous wink: "With the exception of Harijan, of course."

Gandhi was considered as an ethical journalist. The basic codes and canons commonly appear in statements drafted by both professional journalism and journalistic organizations today was followed by Gandhi far before. While various existing codes have some differences, most share common elements including the principles of truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness and public accountability – as these apply to the acquisition of newsworthy information and its subsequent dissemination to the public. Gandhi concentrated on this. He considered professional integrity as the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility. Reporting the truth is never libel, which makes accuracy very important. At the same time giving false information is a crime.

As with other ethical codes, there is a perennial concern that the standards of journalism are being ignored. One of the most controversial issues in modern reporting is media bias, especially on political issues, but also with regard to cultural and other issues. Sensationalism is also a common complaint. Minor factual errors are also extremely common, as almost anyone who is familiar with the subject of a particular report will quickly realize. There are also some wider concerns, as the media continue to change, for example that the brevity of news reports and use of sound bites has reduced fidelity to

the truth and may contribute to a lack of needed context for public understanding.

Audience have different reactions to depictions of violence, nudity, coarse language, or to people in any other situation that is unacceptable to or stigmatized by the local culture or laws (such as the consumption of alcohol, homosexuality, illegal drug use, scatological images etc.) Even with similar audiences, different organisations and even individual reporters have different standards and practices. These decisions often revolve around what facts are necessary for the audience to know. Gandhi was a man of action. Gandhi without action is meaningless. Gandhi's truth is utterly different from ordinary truth. His works are more powerful than his words. He believed the man is multi dimensional. So he insisted on that we must use heart, head and hand before any action. This includes his method of journalistic action also. Gandhi knew that truth will prevail. He showed this by his method of direct action. This is the philosophic cause which he talk his ardent stand against giving false information through journals. A great degree of altruism is inherent and imbedded in this approach. This truthful approach is very important for a person who believe that there are some values which are higher than our body.

(ii) Butchering Independent Thinking

Gandhi said, 'the newspapers should be read for the study of facts. They should not be allowed to kill the habit of independent thinking.' Mahatma Gandhi's speech during his visit to 'The Hindu' sums up his philosophy and vision of journalism: "I have, therefore, never been tired of reiterating to journalists whom I know that journalism should never be prostituted for selfish ends or for the sake of merely earning a livelihood or, worse still, for amassing money. Journalism, to be useful and serviceable to the country, will take its

definite, its best for the service of the country and whatever happens, the views of the country irrespective of consequences. I think that we have in our midst the making of newspapers which can do so”.

It is an age which newspapers are creating news artificially. News and views are making with selfish motives to increase the popularity of the papers. This type of manipulations will destroy both the independent thinking capacity of the reader and the credibility of the newspaper. At the same time the newspapers are taking partisan approach to the consumers having high purchasing power. Fashion shows and theme weddings taking more time and space of the media. The problems of the society especially that of the common people ignored. The power of collective and independent thinking will be lost as a result. Today the media in India is facing mediocrity. There is no scope for excellence. Gandhi foreseen this danger and said, there is no scope for excellence in journalism. The great journalists like Mahatma Gandhi, Thomas Pyne, John Reed, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar etc. influence the thought process of the society with the help of their mighty pen. Today the journalistic field is tremendously changed. The field become more advanced and technology based. But the basic principle that the media influence the thought process of the individual and the society is more prevalent today. It is an urgent necessary to grow the minds of media persons as well as technology. Otherwise it will be a danger.

‘Executive’ is supervised by the ‘legislative’. Judiciary discusses the merits and demerits of these two estates. But fourth estate is analysing all these three. So it is more powerful and popular. To collect analyses and distribute reports is easier today. But these reports and information become vain if the media does not arouse desirable attitudes. Undoubtedly the power of the media is growing. But the responsibility is not growing proportionally. Many media killing independent thinking, by giving irresponsible news and views. The

views of reporters and media owners imbibed in each news item in each newspaper. Then the reader got only distorted view. This also led to the killing of independent thinking.

It is welcome sign that most people now do not believe everything they read. This realization also helps the process of diversification in the media field. The media must also be ready to correct whenever any report is later found to incorrect. Sensationalism attract common readers to a large extent. But that will, in the long run, kill the habit of serious thinking. The power to know and inform things is the strength of the media. This strength is not recognized today. Decentralisation and localization of news was the straw that broke the camel's back. But even then the habit of reading and the capability to analyse or criticize the media is existing. It is good for the society. Though this popular observation is prevailing, the newspapers are sometimes going to the channel of unwanted approaches vested interests, hidden agenda, the pressure from the side of media owners, financial reasons..... etc are the cause of this. This will destroy the opinion making capacity of the media. Authenticity and credibility will lost. Gandhi, C.P. Scott, Harold Ivans etc., criticised this adamantly. They belived that the newspapers must have the power of ethics and principles. It must prevail moral values. As Mr. Sasikumar, founder Asianet Malayalam Channel, pointed out media activity is a cultural movement. When it become a business it will become artificial. Then it will kill independent thinking⁷.

Creating wrong news and publishing it is neither good nor wise to the society. There is a saying among the American paparasies that if you give us a pen full of ink and mindful of poison we will destroy anyone. This is the wrong path. Any journalist who has social commitment can not accept this approach. The news must arise the minds of readers. News items must not be information packets.

Otherwise it will kill independent thinking and so both national and personal development. Successful communication will give information, interpretation (views) and entertainment at the same time.

Article 2. Freedom of the Press

Freedom of the press is based on the freedom of the people to know. Right to information, speech and expression....etc are also part of this. This right is considered as a privilege in almost all countries. Gandhi, Nehru, Jafferson...etc. gave their views on press freedom firmly. Gandhi was human and humane. He relentlessly fought against injustices and inequality. He was a great liberator of mankind. He gave a new philosophy to his nation and to mankind. He was a lover of truth and justice, fighter for freedom and inherent rights of the individual, advocates the democracy and purity of public life. Gandhi served his country and through it humanity at large and left an indelible impress on the course of human history.

Gandhi said, the highest form of freedom carries with it the greatest measure of discipline and humility. Freedom that comes from discipline and humility can not be denied; unbridled licence is a sign of vulgarity, injurious alike to self and one's neighbours.⁸ Gandhi was a great fighter of freedom as well as an educationist. He considered journalism also as mass education. He said, "According to me, real education consists in learning the art of thinking. If we can master it, everything else will follow in beautiful order".⁹

Gandhi insisted that if Press Freedom is violated, the people must protest strongly against it even by undergoing satyagraha, for the freedom of the Press is vital to the success of democracy. Even if it involves great sacrifices, it is worth the trouble because it is better to die as a free citizen than to live as a slave. Gandhi did not mean that

the newspapers should be given licence to write what they liked. Press liberty must have certain restrictions. But these restrictions must be decided upon by journalists and editors themselves. They must follow certain self-imposed control. Gandhi believed that 'freedom, has always had many limits.'¹⁰

Gandhi was rising his sound in the 11th chapter of 'Hind Swaraj' by saying that restricting the freedom of the press is injustice.¹¹ Right to know is considered as a basic human right by him. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. So Gandhi advocated the press for this vigilance. To him, it was a part of basic human rights and civil liberty. An editor has the right to select matters for publishing in a newspaper. This freedom must not be restricted either by government or by media owner. Even if the government dislikes the liberties taken by the press and considers them dangerous, it is wrong to interfere with the press. A completely free press with all the dangers involved in the wrong use of that freedom than a suppressed or a regulated press. "The liberty of the press is a dear privilege, apart from the advisability or otherwise of civil disobedience", Gandhi wrote.¹²

Gandhi emphasized the great importance and the immeasurable potency of the individual in society. The society should accept his freedom and moral autonomy. Man is the maker of his own destiny in the sense that he has the freedom of choice as to the manner in which he uses his freedom."¹³ Denial or deprivation of individual freedom is contrary to the very nature of man. In the Gandhian line of thinking, the individual's status as a human being is prior to his position as a member of society or as a citizen of some state. Gandhi's notion of the presence of God in man amounts to a belief that man has free will, reason, conscience and love.¹⁴ It is in the individual level. In the social level Gandhi considered, civil liberty is the breath of political and social life, and it includes freedom of the press.¹⁵ He explains, Civil

liberty includes freedom of the press and freedom to read newspaper which do not promote violence.¹⁶

During the entire period of the freedom struggle, one could see that the British Government tried to control and curtail the freedom of speech and expression of the press. "If one has no affection for a person or system, one should be free to give the fullest expression to his disaffection so long as he does not contemplate, promote or incite violence."¹⁷ Administrative interference with the liberty of the press under a law that is under promise of repeal be regarded as anything but repression.¹⁸ Gandhi's non-violent action was directed towards safeguarding the elementary rights of free speech, free association and free press. Gandhi wrote, 'Every state has the right to put down violence by force, but to suppress expression of opinion in order to prevent the spread of disaffection is repression.'¹⁹ There should be freedom of opinion and public opinion has to be respected. The indispensable condition for the success of a cause is that "we encourage the greatest freedom of opinion and public opinion has to be respected. The indispensable condition for the success of a cause is that, "We encourage the greatest freedom of opinion."²⁰

Almost all developed countries consider the right to information act as sacred. The free society of Sweden, Canada, U.S.A. and Australia has evolved as a result of such an act. To enforce this law U.S.A. alone spends 60 billion dollar per year. Such a law is inevitable to ensure press freedom and to fulfill democratic rights. The rights to information and various human rights acts ensure the freedom of the press in the modern society. Gandhi foresightedly wrote, 'freedom of the press is a precious privilege that no country can forego.'²¹

(i) Media's Role in a Democratic Country

Media plays a vital role in any democratic country. Creating opinion among the people and carrying the information back to the policy makers is the duty of the media. To inform, to interpret, to evaluate, to educate, to conscientise, to entertain, to inspire and to create opinion are considered as the major roles of media. Media will make a vigilant society and it will join various groups of people. To empower a democratic system and to ensure communal harmony are the other roles of media. Media activity is a kind of informal education. For this, media persons should keep intellectual truthfulness and justifiable analysis. Moral principles and dharmic principles must be propagated by the media. Media giving emotional news items to propagate good feelings in the society. Our national leaders, especially Gandhiji played the major role in this. The progress in education helped the progress in media literacy. But at the same time the devaluation in every walk of life affects the media field also. Social, cultural and educational growth of the society is directly related to the information spreading power of media. But today media is giving more importance to entertainments. This is a degradation. Gandhi was against this. He was also against to all kinds of mind polluting activities which the media practicing today. "Our holiest temple is our body. We should take care not to let it be infected with any impurity from outside. We should not sully the purity of the mind with evil thoughts."²² So media has the duty to create better society by creating better individuals. Now we are becoming the members of a global community. The traditional systems are replaced by modern system in a tremendous speed. These cultural changes and media is inter-related. Modernisation results value changes. This change is seen in the history of India even from the period of the Britishers. Foreigners introduced new printing units in Kerala. The people of Kerala had a

unique culture. We use westernisation in a different democratic participatory process and practice. This shows a good example of the influence of the media in the society.

Gandhi considered the upliftment of the poor as one of the duties of his journals. He wrote, “Daridranarayana is one of the millions of names by which humanity knows God who is unnameable and unfathomable by human understanding, and it means God of the poor, God appearing in the hearts of the poor.”²³ Again, in the opinion of Gandhi, service of the poor is not one among the ways, but the only way to worship and love God. Gandhi cannot find any higher way of worshipping God than by serving the poor and identifying himself with them.

The Media has the duty to propagate satyagrahas and other means of protests against social evils. At the time of freedom struggle, the breach of salt laws was reported by the media around the world. In that time the Journalism in India was a tool of the freedom struggle. But in free India it becomes a profession. Media become the fourth estate. So media should fulfil the role of the fourth estate and professionals should search for journalistic heights and excellence. The presentation of news must be factual. The professionals must not go for libertarian freedom. The press freedom must be self-restricted and use with social responsibility. Hachin’s commission explained this as the factual, matter-of-fact, integrated presentation of news. Gandhi also had the opinion that the mass media must be the platform of expression of opinions and criticism. The media must be a corrective force. The values of the society must be preserved. At the same time the various opinions must be expressed.²⁴

The role of media in fighting for social welfare and justice is accepted and appreciated in almost all developed countries. In America, the ‘American Society of Newspaper editors’ published ‘the

canon of Journalism' in 1923. This underlined the above said responsibility of the media. In Kerala, the first Malayalam Daily 'Nazrani Deepika' declared about this in its first editorial published on 15th April, 1887. But today the media is deviating from fulfilling its role.

For Gandhi, no man was too mean to be loved or trusted for even the lowest of the low represented the lord in his own way. Like the poet, he also would say, "My path is with the pathless and my tract with the tactless"²⁵ The alertness and virtuousness on the part of the people will act as an automatic check on the government to public opinion

(ii) Remedy for Commercialisation of Newspapers

Gandhi giving the guidelines to Urdu Navajivan as, "Dr. Yadhvir Singh has been, on his own responsibility, issuing at Delhi, a weekly Urdu edition of 'Navajivan' containing his selections from both 'Navajivan' and 'Young India.' He assures me that the Urdu edition will be conducted strictly along the lines of Young India and Navajivan. It will accordingly have no advertisements and will publish only such material as appears in the two weeklies. The annual subscription is only three rupees. I have always felt that Urdu knowing people should know the message of these weeklies. I hope Dr. Yadhvir Singh will be encouraged by the Urdu knowing public."²⁶ Here we can see Gandhi's attitude towards newspapers. To him, journalism is a means of mass education. Education is a kind of liberation from all sorts of bonds. He said that slavery is of two types: internal and external. The bondage of power is external slavery. The internal slavery is the bondage of man to artificial wants and necessities. So, to Gandhi, commercialisation of newspapers is unjustifiable. He lived in a period when the newspapers gave advertisements fully in the first page. Then Gandhi avoid the

advertisements absolutely. Gandhi found the newspaper of his time as commercial, afraid of the government and not truthful in reporting. He believed like Rubecca West, “a community needs news, for the same reason, that a man needs eyes. It has to see where it is going.” Today the newspapers are becoming more commercial, both circulation wise and advertisement wise. The editorial content is also tending to be more commercial. As a result of this the influence of the papers decreased. For the run for commercial success the values and journalistic principles are ignored.²⁷

We saw that Gandhi considered journalism neither as a profession nor as a business. To him it was a service and a sacred duty. He was not profit motive. Gandhi feared that if the media become profit motive that will affect the political thinking itself. Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Tilak and Shri Aurobindo empower the millions of people with the help of their mighty pen. India was a land where words are considered as ‘manthras’. Words are the symbols of “Brahma”. So in this sacred land, commercialization of news is not justifiable. The history of the struggle of India for freedom is also the story of the great Indian newspapers. Such a story is unique in the history of the world. Gandhi used his dailies for empowering Indian nationalism. He could find the soul of this country. He taught us that media should stand for national integration instead of stand for commercial tug of war.

Gandhiji believed that, “What morally wrong will never be correct in any other way.”²⁸ But today, the society changed very much. There are so many malpractices for attaining money. Society become more industrialized as well as commercialized. The consumerist tendency prevailed in the society. Newspapers are also changed along with this. Advertisements are now become essential part of newspapers. If we avoid the advertisements fully, the price of the newspaper becomes very high. Even then, the advertisements must

have certain norms and conditions. It must not overcome the limits of moral and ethical codes.

Now media is a big business. But Gandhi believed in the principle of 'Small is beautiful'. News paper industry is now related to many other industries directly or indirectly. Some media owners themselves are the owners of many other industries. This will decreasing the credibility, truthfulness, balance of opinion and impartiality. Gandhi, like Ben Bugdickian gave the dangers of this in his writings. The centralisation of ownership and the purposeful repetition of hidden agendas are harmful to the society. Media activities are based on social science theories and principles. Communication may affect the society in many ways. It will create new thought both desirable and undesirable. It will create new trends, tendencies and tastes. It will also led us to new wants. So the over commercialization of the media must be remedied. Gandhi foreseen that it is necessary for social progress, non violence, justice, truthfulness and mutual respect among persons.

(iii) Press Laws and Limitations of the Press

In India most of the press laws are developed in the spirit of Gandhian philosophy and ideology. Truth is considered as one of the cardinal vows of Gandhian thought. The press laws also underlines the importance of truth. Gandhi was a lawyer in his life for about 20 years. It also helped him to develop good ethical standards for journalism. He said that the law and lawgiver are one.²⁹ "The law is God. Anything attributed to Him is not a mere attribute. He is Truth, love, law and a million things that human ingenuity can name"³⁰

The wholistic knowledge on law is not needed to common journalists. But the total ignorance of law is very dangerous. If a journalist knows press laws he got several practical benefits. In the

history of Indian journalism we can see such examples. In 1878 the British government introduced the Vernacular Press Act. Sisir Kumar Khosh changed his Bangali daily Amrit Bazar Patrika into an English daily. This was a benefit of intellectual approach to law.

The base of press law is the right of citizens for speech and expression. This freedom was the base of press freedom. In many countries, the press laws are ensures constitutionally. But in India it included in the freedom of speech and expression. The right to information also helps the journalists to attain several information especially from the part of the government. In this age of market economy and free trade, no one can hide things for ever. This also helps the journalists to perform their duty fruitfully.

Gandhiji never considered journalism only as a profession. He said, "Journalism is not only a profession. If it become so it will be a limitation. A good editor must be a social activist. He must turn the flow of the society."³¹ Gandhiji had the opinion that the editor must show bravery to take the responsibility of whatever written is the newspaper. It may help the journalists to keep self-restraints and decipline. Public service must be the main aim of the dailies. Journalists must ignore all problems for the sake of public cause. "A true journalist must aim at the welfare of the society. He must be a sarvodaya activist. He must propagate satyagraha."³²

The article written by Gandhiji on 13th March 1922 in 'Young India' caused the opposition of the British Government. Gandhi was arrested and jailed for sedition. This was his first arrest in India. The editor M.K. Gandhi and publisher Mr. Desai of Young India were accused. This was the first contempt of court case against Gandhiji. This case is similar to the Thalidomyde case in England. The main accusation was against the expression of opinion against court in both the case. But Gandhi took the stand that the journalist has the right

to take opinion against that of the courts. He wrote it in 'Young India'. Then the Indian press law was not admitted that. But in 2005 the Gandhian stand was approved. The stand, Truth as defence was included.

Gandhiji believed that the different editors of the same newspaper must take the same stand. He was the editor of 'Indian Opinion' from 1904 in South Africa. The weekly was published in English, Tamil and Gujarati. These three language editions had the same stand and point of view. This was same for Harijan. This weekly was published in 10 Indian languages simultaneously. All these editions have the same opinion and point of view.³³

Gandhi was against to all kinds of attack on the freedom of the press. His firm stand against the martial law shows that. Gandhi's stand helped and influenced the Indian press council later. According to the observations of the Press Council, a journalist cannot be compelled to disclose his source of information except by a court of law, as it amounts to encroachment on the freedom of press and the people's right to obtain information in matters relating to public interest.

While we are saying about all these laws and privileges of the press, it has certain limitation also. The present problems of pollution, population, arms race and corruption are increasing. These vices can be contained by continuous cultivation of positive attitudes, moral values and ethics through the practice of spiritual wisdom. Media men should also give equal importance to publish good and positive news and should take up their profession with missionary zeal to develop social and moral values in self and society. The media person are not at all working for the restoration of moral social and spiritual values in society. But media cannot do this alone without popular support of public against corrupt politicians, administration and systems. This is

another limitation of the press. Society itself is not free from bias and prejudices and is incapable of protecting media men from victimisation. Cooperation from local administration is also lacking. Under these circumstances role of media people can't be fool proof unless proper support and inputs are given to media men at local level.

Media men need some soul-searching today to improve the image of the profession, which has degraded from a noble mission to a profit-oriented business concern owing to the incursion of corruption, consumerism, politics, police and bureaucratic pressures.

Article 3. Media and the Society

Gandhiji had a good vision about the society. He gave great importance to the creation of public opinion. He said, 'Public opinion alone can keep a society pure and healthy.'³⁴ To him one of the main duties of media is opinion creation.

"Society is sustained by several services. The 'bhangi' (beauty) constitutes the foundation of all services."³⁵ Gandhi again explained this by saying that 'willing submission to social restraint for the sake of the well-being of the whole society enriches both the individual and the society of which he is a member.'³⁶

Gandhi was projecting positive ideas through his writings. He knew that differences of opinion were inevitable in a living society.³⁷ Media men should stop negative thinking and should have positivity in their attitude, expression and actions to guide people and society into a state or condition. The prevailing atmosphere of fear, anxiety, tension and insecurity the role and responsibility of media men need a spiritual overhauling of their mind set and attitude to spread the message of peace, discipline honesty, simplicity, health and harmony in the society. There are no dearth of values and goodness in present

society but they have been veiled by vested interests of powerful people like politicians and administrators. All sections of society including media should take up the responsibility to work in consonance for building a better world by eliminating the negative elements.

Media man should highlight Indian culture, ethos, values and tradition and should discourage the evil spells of foreign culture and lifestyle which have spoiled our younger generation. Media men should take their profession as a sacred mission, as a service to the society in the spirit of freedom fight from all negativity, vested interests and influence of foreign culture to regenerate India to its height of morality and spiritual wisdom. Media men should not despair and loose hope on the face of antagonistic forces and factors obstructing their creative and free expressions but should continue to work for social, cultural, moral and spiritual transformation of society in spite of repeated failures and setbacks. Creative awareness among media persons is inevitable to bring out qualitative change in their thinking, outlook, vision, values and lifestyles.

Gandhiji was very much aware of the injustices against to women and weaker sections in the society. He rouse his voice for equality of women in the society from his South African days. Welfare of Harijans and removal of untouchability was his crusade in India. He fought against communalism. He was against to all kinds of yellow journalism. All these are the duties of media even today.

Today we are observing the advertisement culture everywhere in the society. Gandhi was fully against to all kinds of advertisements. As the famous American publisher says, News is what someone wants to stop you printing, all the rest is advertisement. Gandhi was in the side of news and views. For increasing the circulation, the media is converting the women body into a consumer product. No media is trying to the empowerment of women. So the society also.

The media must strongly advocate for the protection of environment. Environmental education is the duty of the press. In many countries, the green press is engaged in conscientising the public against environmental degradation. In India, in 1973, the media gave wide coverage to the Chipco movement for the protection of environment. In Kerala the press seems to reluctant to take us such issues for fear of hostility are from a small but powerful lobby. Some media persons entertain the wrong notion that environmental protection will stipple developmental activities. Some others exaggerate the environmental issues to sensational dimension. Both these approaches are harmful to the society.

Today the media obits in the creation of a consumer culture in the society. Common people easily become victims of this culture. The power of communication is a great boon given by God to the human race. This must be used only for constructive and creative purposes. Man has the responsibility to use this unique skill of communication for the well-being of all sections of the society. We should keep in mind the great vision of the Rishis 'Vasudhaiva Kudumbakom' (The whole universe is a family)

If the media choose a wrong path, concerted corrective action will be inevitable. In America, when the media started giving wrong information, the readers resisted it through a movement called 'Fair'. They exposed each and every false news as and when they appear in newspapers which forced the media to give up the practice. The peaceful agitation ensured the accuracy of news. People learned to approach news with a judicious mind. As a result of the influence of this movement, newspaper giants like The New York Times, and the Wall Street journal became highly cautious about their news publication. This is a good example of the power of collective reaction to a media malpractice.

(i) Women and Social Injustices

Gandhi had great consideration on the role of women in the society. He was against to all kinds of social injustices against women. He wrote, "From being man's co-equal, co-sharer and helpmate, she became his subordinate or rather slave, to be used at will for satisfying his wants, with no rights or will of her own."³⁸ In working for the emancipation of women, Gandhi's motto was the equality of the sexes. To him both men and women are complementary to each other. "Languages proclaim that woman is half of man and by party of reasoning man is half of woman. They are not two separate entities, but halves of one. The English language goes further and calls woman the better half of man."³⁹ Here we can observe Gandhi's keen observation on language also. This was a good quality for a real journalist.

Gandhiji wrote in Harijan, "Man should learn to give place to women and a country or a community in which women are not honoured cannot be considered as civilized."⁴⁰ Unfortunately, even today women are ignored by men in many fields. The media also is degrading the women in many ways. Gandhi's views own feminism is realistic. Though Gandhi stood for the equality of the sexes, he was not in favour of equality of occupation, because man and women were equal but not identical.⁴¹ Gandhi undoubtedly played a pivotal role in the changing status of women in early twentieth century India. He was a strong advocate of women's rights in the 1920's and 1930's. Moreover, his successful call to women to join the nationalist movement served as a catalyst for the wider participation of women in public affairs". Gandhi's position on women's issues was based on two fundamental concepts: equality between the sexes and differentiation of their social roles. The positions taken by Gandhi on most women's issues, with the exception of the use of artificial means of birth control,

were remarkably similar to those leading women reformers of the period.”⁴²

Gandhi's advocacy of traditional female's roles for women was therefore in harmony. With his own overall philosophical view, women are equal to men, but different. He believed that women have a special contribution to make to satyagraha. Between 1920 and 1940 Gandhi gradually came to advocate a greatly expanded role for women in public affairs. The participation of women in picketing liquor shops and strikes against sellers of foreign cloth must be appreciated.

According to Gandhi, Women have a special contribution to make to humanity as the embodiment of ahimsa which would be lost by initiating man's ways. He said: “She can run the race but she will not rise to the heights she is capable of by mimicking man.”⁴³

Gandhi opposed the custom of child marriage. It may cause early widowhood. This was the cause of his protest. Gandhi was an ardent supporter of compulsory education for girls as well as boys. In his Basic National Education Scheme elaborated in 1937, Gandhiji proposed free and compulsory education for children of both sexes from ages 7 to 14.

Gandhi's strong advocacy of social reform to liberate women cannot be seen as a revolutionary doctrine aimed at a radical change of the core institutions of Indian society. But there is evidence that he was aware of female subordination deeply ingrained in the very fabric of society. Gandhi believed that the search for truth through non-violent resistance is particularly suited for women. He also believed that satyagraha is a true remedy for the problems of women as well as those of the society as a whole. Emancipation of women was a great contribution of Gandhi to Hinduism. “Gandhi could not even think that a religion which commanded love for others could approve such

injustices, towards women.”⁴⁴ Gandhi wrote continually on women’s issues in his publications. At the same time he was not a blind feminist. He wrote, “My own opinion is that, just as fundamentally man and women are one, their problem must be one in essence.”⁴⁵ Gandhi gave practical guidelines for women to line fearlessly in the society. “Parents and husbands should instruct women in the art of becoming fearless. It can best be learnt from a living faith in God. He who has this faith is the most fearless of all.”⁴⁶

Gandhi considered women as the incarnation of tolerance. He admits it in his autobiography also.⁴⁷ Gandhi purposefully involved women in his satyagraha struggles. Some times Gandhi allowed lady doctors to nurse him during the fast.⁴⁸ Gandhi also wrote that, the division of the spheres and culture required are practically the same for both the sexes. Woman will occupy her proud position by the side of man as his mother, maker and silent leader.⁴⁹

In Kerala, women’s magazines could participate in the process of social change. The content analysis of women’s magazines shows that the old magazines were not actuated by profit motive. They fought against sati, dowry system, child marriage and all other atrocities committed against women in those days. Gandhian monuments in the state gave energy to these magazines. Today, the magazines for women are in a race behind fashion, sex, cooking and cinema. They are not even touching the real problems of women. Media in general is also not giving justice to women. Sometimes, women themselves are questioning this approach. It is a ray of hope.

There is another problem of inequality in the media arena regarding the situation of women. Some media are purposefully damaging the image of women. Both in news and in advertisements women are portrait as a consumerist product. Some publications are increasing their circulation by choosing this way. Not only the

newspaper establishments, but also the advertisement companies are exploiting the women. They are trivialising the women's issues and consider them as a commodity. The general public are not even realizing the danger in it. Here lies the importance of Gandhiji's words.

(ii) Upliftment of Harijans and Removal of Untouchability

The name of one of Gandhiji's publication was 'Harijan'. That clearly shows that the question of the upliftment of Harijan was uppermost in his mind. Gandhi endeavored ceaselessly to identify himself with the lowliest strata of the society and its neglected segments more specially the Harijan who were considered to be the dregs of Indian society. To the Mahatma, the whole world was his family, irrespective of any distinctions of caste, creed, colour or country. Gandhi fought against untouchability because it is detrimental to the good of humanity as a whole. "And in pursuing this universal goal, I discovered years ago that untouchability as it is practiced today among Hindus, as a hindrance not only to the march of Hindus towards their own good, but also a hindrance to the general good of all."⁵⁰

Therefore, by removing untouchability, Gandhi wanted to establish the brotherhood of man. "And remember too, the magnificent result that we intend, or we expect, to achieve from this removal of untouchability, it is not less than the realization of the brotherhood of man."⁵¹ This brotherhood was not only of Hindus, not only for the Indians but of the whole world. Today we are propagating universal brotherhood as one of the goals of world media. Gandhi was a great man who believed and stand for universal brother hood far before. "I for one, shall not be satisfied until, as the result of this movement, we have arrived at a heart-unity amongst all the different races and communities inhabiting this land, and it is for that reason that I have invited the cooperation of all the people living in India and even

outside.”⁵² Gandhiji said that fight against untouchability was motivated by love as it was meant to realize the universal brotherhood of man.

At the same time, Gandhi was interested in using coercion in removing this social injustice. He asked, “It is a sacred mission. Can one serve a sacred cause by adopting satan’s methods?”⁵³ Gandhi himself many a time resorted to fasts unto death for this cause, and he was even prepared to sacrifice his life in the process of removing this blata at social evil. R.C. Zaehner pays glittering tribute to Gandhi for this achievement: “His campaign against untouchability fired the conscience of India. He knew that violence cannot be conquered by violence, but only by its opposite.”⁵⁴ One of the greatest religious reformations of Gandhi was the upliftment of the poor and the forsaken people in India. It was a sacred mission fulfilled with courage and commitment. He himself declared that it was the love of the people which induced him to work against untouchability.⁵⁵

Gandhi considered untouchability as a hydra-headed monster. God never made man that he may consider another man as an untouchable.⁵⁶ He said that the removal of untouchability is one of the highest expressions of ahimsa. He also regarded untouchability as such a grave sin as to warrant Divine chastisement. “My fight against untouchability is a fight against the impure in humanity,” He said.⁵⁷ No other Indian journalist, like Gandhi made his pen as a sword against untouchability so much. He wrote, “Untouchability is a many-headed monster and appears in many shapes and forms, some of them so subtle as not to be easily detected.”⁵⁸ In his opinion diversity in the world is neither inequality nor untouchability. He even said, ‘whilst the Bihar calamity (Earthquake disaster of Jan. 1934) damages the body, the calamity brought about by untouchability corrodes the very

soul.”⁵⁹ “For me (Gandhi) there is a vital connection between the Bihar calamity and the untouchability campaign.”⁶⁰

Gandhi wanted the progress and welfare of the whole society. He called it ‘Sarvodaya or wholistic progress.’ He did not believe in the maximum good of the maximum number. He stood for the emancipation of the last needy poor – Antyodaya. His journalistic experiments were comprehensive enough to cover all the sections of the complex Indian society. But today, most of the journals and newspapers do not uphold the interest of the poor. They seem to have established an unholy tie up with the rich and those in position of power. Most of the journalists are come from non-dalit background and are not inclined to help them. Even so, there are a few in the field which have always stood and still stand by the hopeless, helpless poor and the downtrodden. They are working as the torch-bearers of Gandhian ideals which strongly advocate sweeping changes not only in the life but also in the attitude of the dalits and other destitute who constitute a considerable portion of our population.

The enlightenment of dalit communities are not discussed in today’s newspapers. The well circulated dailies are not committed to dalit issues and their enlightenment. Some small magazines and periodicals are helping the dalits in Kerala. Indian newspapers must give more space for the issues of dalits. It is a necessity of our time. Various opinions in the society must be widely discussed in newspaper. It is a matter of media justice also. According to R.D. Parikh, today the mainstream newspapers gave 40% of space for commercial news, 20% for political and social news, 30% for entertainment, 5% for opinion creation and 5% for social reformation. This is not fruitful for the dalit community.⁶¹ Gandhian revolutionary journalistic approach was never considering the ‘selling point’ of news. In Kerala, newspapers like, Sahodaran Ayyappan’s ‘Sahodaran’ led the

dalit community to the main stream of the society. In India, Gandhiji's 'Harijan' Dr. B.R.Ambedkar's 'Mookanayak' other dailies like 'Dalit Voice', 'Samata', 'Sainik Dal', 'Axe' etc stood strongly for the dalits. The main stream media must gave enough space for the downtrodden brothers in the society. This is their duty. It is necessary for the preservation of the value system of the society. Gandhi prophetically foreseen this and took stand with social justice. It is absolute necessary for peaceful co-existence and harmony in the society.

(iii) Communalism and Media

This is an age which the media gave over-importance to news items on communal issues. The duty of the media is to led men from animal nature to human nature. The newspapers are using violent language to report communal riots. This is harmful to the general society. The hatred increases. Some of the newspapers takes partisan approach in communal problems. The secular newspapers are also becoming tools in the hands of administrators and politicians. In Ayodhya and in Gujarat we saw this. The vote bank politics influence the media also.⁶²

In this context an analytic study of Gandhi's approach in this matter is quite relevant. When riots were raging from Malabar to Nao-Khali Gandhiji came to the scene with absolute equanimity and fearlessly met the misguided mob with love and compassion. On 21st Sept. 1921, Gandhi spoke about Malabar riots at a place near Madhura. He stressed on the self control exercised by both Hindus and Muslims. He said that these communities are the children of the same God and are brothers and sisters. Some newspapers criticized Gandhiji for taking such an attitude. In 'Young India' he wrote: "Let us remember that we are all Indians eating Indian grain and salt, and living on the dumb Indian masses."⁶³

Gandhiji considered religion as a tool for unification and harmony. To him love is the most potent weapon of religion. Gandhi was proud about Hinduism. But he was not a fanatic Hindu. He was a spiritual secularist. At the same time he was not a non-religious secularist. He followed the inner voice. He advised everyone to follow their inner voice. He practiced it in his speeches and writings. His religious approach was participatory pluralism. Religions must be different. But the path to God will be the same. In 1946, he said at Naokhali, I am a Hindu, I am a Muslim, I am a Christian, I am a Parsi, as you all. Gandhi wanted religions to be there. He never wanted to avoid them. He wanted a Hindu must become a good Hindu, a Muslim to be a good Muslim... and so on. Fellowship must be created. He wanted for religion for reconciliation, peace, brotherhood, harmony and fellowship. He wrote and advocated for inter-religious approaches. He said that there is no God higher than truth. Gandhi was a relevant answer for journalists today and tomorrow while handling communal issues. “Many persons claiming different faiths make us one and an indivisible nation. All these have an equal claim to be the nationals of India.⁶⁴ This was Gandhi’s approach. This approach is academic and practical at the same time. This shows Gandhi’s relevance was eternal. So why we say Gandhi is great, He consider that true religion and true morality are inseparably interrelated. ‘I have broadened my Hinduism by understanding all other religions.’ – Gandhi said. Like him every journalist has the responsibility to give contribution to secularism.

(iv) Against Yellow Journalism

Yellow journalism, also known as ‘yellow press’ is a type of journalism that down plays legitimate news in favour of eye-catching headlines for boosting sale. In short it is biased opinion, masquerading as objective fact. Moreover, the practice of yellow journalism involves sensationalism. It exploits, distorts, or exaggerates the news to create

sensations and attract readers. It is a mutated version of journalism that goes against the key principles of reporting as an unbiased and objective tool. Gandhi strongly condemned this practice.

Gandhi was an ardent seeker and advocate of truth. To him everything, including journalism was a search after truth. So there is no place in his experiment in journalism for untruth. The yellow journalism deceives the readers and ensnare them. Exaggerations of news events, scandal – mongering, and sensationalism, and many other unprofessional practices are a common feature of this kind of journalism. Combell Observes : These journals carry multi-column front page headlines covering a variety of topics, such as sports and scandal, using bold layouts (with large illustrations and perhaps colour) heavy reliance of unnamed sources, and unabashed self promotion.”⁶⁵ Today any newspaper which is given to in an unprofessional or unethical practices, such as consistent political bias falls within the definition of Yellow journalism.

According to Frank Luther Mott (1941) one of the main characteristics of yellow journalism is the use of faked interviews, misleading headlines, pseudo science and a parade of false learning from so called experts. All these are untruth in a kind and so unethical, in the opinion of Gandhi. What morally wrong will not be correct in any other way. Gandhi, like Joseph Pulitzer, believed that newspapers were public institutions with a duty to improve society, and he put the publication in the service of social reform. At the same time Gandhi was not against some sort of exaggeration or ornamental writing in reports to increase readability. Gandhi clearly explained it in a letter to T.K. Menon as a reply to his opinion about Mathrubhumi, the National Daily in Malayalam.

As a result of the increasing competition in the field, major newspapers are also showing yellow nature today. This is also a threat

to the right of privacy of individuals. It also causes the violation of human rights. The yellow press often report things inaccurately. Eager to write a juicy story, the journalists feed on rumours. This rampant yellow journalism and hypocrisy has driven people to distrust and even hate this category of journalists. When journalists insult common people using derogatory terms and spread lies and rumours, then they should also be prepared to face the same music from people one day or other. Lies and half truths do severe damage to society. Gandhi said, "Experience convinces me that permanent good can never be the outcome of untruth and violence."⁶⁶

Gandhi take firm stand against yellow journalism because he considered journalism as a great responsibility to society. With great power comes great responsibility. If journalists do not show responsibility and do not question the facts, then soon people will lose their faith on media. Today, people use extremely derogatory language on English TV media in blogs because of media bias. Some times the same has to happen for print media as well.

In India, almost all newspaper published a lie in Nov. 2006 that 70% of Indian women face domestic violence referring it to U.N. In reality, it had not source in U.N, which means it is a lie. Washington Times apologized for picking up that lie. No Indian newspaper or T.V. Channel has apologized yet. The journalists must do some unbiased research so that lies and half-truths can be filtered. Sometimes journalists forget that when they campaign for "extreme laws", then innocent people get victimised and these victims lose sympathy of the society due to radicalization by media. Then, these people blame the journalists for being extremists and promoters of yellow journalism. Above said, 70% women facing domestic violence is a piece of yellow journalism. Such attempts are untruth. So Gandhi opposed it. He

said: “Truth and untruth often co-exist, good and evil are often found together.”⁶⁷

Article 4. Gandhian Journalism – A Critique

(i) Assessment of Gandhiji’s contribution

Mahatma Gandhi was a man who opened a new path in journalism. He realized the responsibility of an editor even from his South African days. He considered journalism neither as a profession nor as a business. To him, it was service – 100% service. He opposed all sorts of external control to press. At the same time he said, it can be profitable only when controlled from within. “If this line of reassuring is correct, how many of the journals in the world would stand the test? But who would stop those that are useless? And who should be the judge? The useful and the useless must, life good and evil generally, go on together, and man must make his choice”. Gandhiji wrote in his autobiography.⁶⁸

The historic and social contributions of Gandhi’s Journalism were evaluated in the previous chapters. He could arouse the minds of millions with his divine touch. He led us to democracy, socialism and equality. Tolerance and harmony was his way of action. After the relentless crusade, Gandhi showed that newspapers could mobilise public opinion and influence official decisions. A versatile approach was seen in his writing. He was clear about the nature and content of his papers. He would not carry any advertisements nor try to make money instead he sought subscribers who would give donations. It was while writing in Indian Opinion that Gandhi stumbled on the concept of satyagraha. The journal was to Gandhi, “a mirror of his own life”.

In his Autobiography, Gandhiji wrote, “Week after week I purred out my soul in its columns and expounded the principles and practice of satyagraha as I understood it. I cannot recall a word in these

articles set down without thought or deliberation or a word of conscious exaggeration, or anything merely to please. Indeed the journal became for me a training in self-restraint and for friends a medium through which to keep in touch with my thoughts.”

Indian opinion functioned for 11 years. It, more or less, forced the South African provincial regime to modify their repressive laws against Indians. One day Gandhi got a call from Bihar, where the Indigo farmers of Champaran were subjected to the same kind of indignity and exploitation as the indentured labourers in South Africa. He promptly went there and investigated the issues and produced a report that would be the envy of the greatest investigative journalist anywhere in the world. After Champaran it was only a matter of time before the Mahatma took to journalism as his most potent weapon of satyagraha.

As coincidence would have it Gandhi was persuaded to take over the editorship of ‘Young India’. Simultaneously, he started to edit and write in ‘Navajivan’, then a Gujarati monthly. His writings in it were translated and published in most of the Indian language newspapers. Later ‘Navajivan’ was published in Hindi, as Gandhi was convinced that Hindi would be the national language of free India.

The Mahatma’s crusade for the repeal of the Press Act of 1910 was a unique piece of journalism. He was telling the rulers that it was in the best interests of the government to repeal the law. Issue after issue of ‘Young India’ and ‘Navajivan’ carried samples of the Mahatma’s journalistic genius which blended seemingly earnest appeals to the government to do what was just and righteous.

In South, Africa his writings often made the white racists look ridiculous. “The white barber refused to cut my black hair extending colour prejudice to not only non Christian skin but non Christian hair

as well. In march 1922, Gandhi was charged with spreading disaffection by writing seditious articles in 'Young India'. In his own inimitable manner Gandhi said: "I hold it to be a virtue to be disaffected towards a government which in its totality has done more harm to India than any previous system. India is less manly under the British rule than she ever was before. Holding such a belief, I consider it to be a sin to have affection for the system."

To these he added Harijan, Harijan Sevak and Harijan Bandhu which became the Mahatma's most potent media carrying his message to the weakest sections of India. Young India and Navajivan stopped functioning in January 1932 when Gandhi was imprisoned. Between 1933 and 1940. Harijan (English), Harijan Bandhu (Gujarati) and Harijan Sevak (Hindi) became the Mahatma's voice to the people of India. In these newspapers found the Mahatma highlighted on social and economic problems of the Indian people. Caste disparities and such instruments of social deprivation as untouchability and discrimination were the targets of the Mahatma's crusade. Gandhi's assessment of the newspapers of the day was not complimentary.

Gandhi believed that, for a newspaper had great commitment and obligation to the society and to the public. In 1940 Gandhi explained his policy, "Non violence (Ahimsa) is my policy. My creed and firm belief." This nonviolent approach in journalism was one of Gandhiji's greatest contribution to that field. Truthful reporting is directly related to journalistic ethics. Gandhi was also an ardent follower of truth. "Truth and non violence are perhaps the active forces you have in the world. The panoplied warrior of truth and non-violence is ever and incessantly active."⁶⁹

Gandhiji's another great contribution was that to language. His language was simple as his life. He could express great ideas in simple words and straight expressions. His language was in graphic manner.

This language attracted the common public in large scale. Gandhi could give contributions to news paper language also.

Gandhiji's publications are a part of mass movement. At the same time they are the tongue of our freedom movement. As a result of Gandhiji's influence, so many newspapers are started from various parts of the country. In Kerala, Mathrubhumi was one such daily.

(ii) Significance of Gandhiji's Journalistic Experiments

Gandhiji's was considered as the prophetic voice of the twentieth century. As Nehru stated, 'the light that has illuminated this country for these many years will illumine this country for many more years; and a thousand years later, that light will be seen in this country, and the world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts'. The great man in loin-cloth with his twin stars of truth and non-violence worked ceaselessly in the field of journalism also. This is not for himself, but for the society. It is the realization of what sociologists call 'Common human' Values, for the triumph of the common human way of life.

Gandhi did not believe in imposing his values or way of life upon others; by the same token, he resisted unto death the attempts of others to impose upon him or his people their values and ways of life. But the Saint of Sabarmati could influence the national newspapers of his time in a positive way. He could influence even the press laws considerably. During Gandhi's period, there was no right for newspapers to write against courts. But in the case of Balagangadhara Tilak, Gandhi wrote against the court. He considered 'Truth as Defence'. Now the courts accept this stand. This is an influence of Gandhi after his death. The world is now recognizing Gandhi as one of the greatest spiritual forces of all times including in the field of journalism. Gandhi called this spiritual force as truth force and

dharma. The Indian concept of dharma is a way of living brings man near into God. Gandhi practiced and gave importance to dharma in all his walks of life including journalistic experiments. Today we all are saying about the importance of media ethics (Madhyama-dharma). Gandhiji foresightedly practiced it.

Modern methods of transportation and communication have spanned the oceans, linked countries together, and made it easy for man to travel and communicate. World is now shrinking as a village. Gandhi is experimenting in various fields of life with the concept of one world. ('ekaloka'). This will continue as a saga; a saga of modern world.⁷⁰ Life was conceived by Mahatma Gandhi as a field for experimentation. Experiment is everlasting and new. The purpose of experiment of life is the attainment of truth and self realisation. No one can deny the need of truthfulness in any media activity. Gandhi gave a greater expression to the same truth. To him it was the inner light, conscience and the still small voice within. At the same time, the sanctions that Gandhi would rely upon were the sanctions of non-violent resistance or of soul force. Journalism is a field of competition. Here a votary of soul force, the soldier of non-violence did a lot with his will power, inner compulsion and rigid discipline. His body, mind and heart moved in accordance with whatever he wrote. He could coordinate thought, word and deed. He became nonviolent in these three ways of silent communication, even under the severest provocation. This is a unique way of communication. In that sense, Gandhi was one of the most experienced communicators of the world.

To day, all of our media ignore the marginalised and the poor. But Gandhi gave primary importance to them. He was against all kind of caste discrimination. He believed that the infinite personality of man could only come from the magnificent harmony of all human races.⁷¹ The very spirit of goodness and friendliness filled the world of Gandhi

in his religious approach. There is no partisan approach. He gave equal regard to all religions – in his own word ‘Sarvadharmā Samabhava’. It is another unique style and significance of Gandhian way.

Nehru rightly said about on Gandhiji: “In an acquisitive society madly searching for new gadgets and new luxuries, he (Gandhi) takes to his loin cloth and his mud hut.”⁷² Here is a journalist lived with minimum wants, a life which is absolutely eco-friendly and believed in need based economy. Economically saying, he was against to the exploitation of human beings, concentration of power and riches in the hands of the few, technological unemployment, and consequent starvation of those displaced by the machine. His sarvodaya concept was based on the noble and happy life of all beings in the world. Gandhi always was incessantly for fighting social justice and equality with his mighty pen. He believed in the free development of human personality and the peaceful international society. Even today, it is not easy to a journalist to work with such a broad vision. This also underlines the significance of Gandhi as a journalist.

Gandhi considered mass communication as mass education. He himself was a great teacher, a great educator and great pedagogical expert. He was considered as a saint among statesmen. He is presented to us as a prophet calling upon his people – and the people of the world – to tread the path of righteousness. He considered performance of duty and observance of morality as convertible terms.⁷³ Gandhi was not believed in the creation of new values. But he replaced the age old values with a new vision. In journalism also this condescending personality never tried to make economic benefits. At the same time, the practical politician and traditional Vaishnava Baniya never allowed his publications in loss economically.

He was a man who gave great planes to Press Freedom. He believed that he who masters himself is the master of the universe. Freedom according to Mahatma Gandhi consists in the capacity to impose restraints upon one's self. During the fight against Martial Law Gandhi explained the importance of free press. He said that we must fight for press freedom, unto death if it is necessary. In that fight, if we lost our life, we are not defeated: The soul will become free at last. What a great concept on press freedom! In short, when we check the significance of Gandhi as a journalist, we can easily find that he is the name of a great truth in history which must be repeated.

(iii) Some Journalistic Examples in the Gandhian Path

After Gandhi's death, Harijan was published in many Indian languages. But they did not last long. It shows that the kind of journalism which Gandhi practiced was unique and nobody could reach that height. But there are so many journalistic miracles in the Gandhian path. They continue to exert influence on modern thinking. A school of thought called 'alternative press' is being developed as an off-shoot of Gandhian journalism. The alternative press consists of printed publications that provide a different or dissident viewpoint than that provided by major mainstream and corporate newspapers, magazines and other print media. As long as there have been mass media there have been alternative media, and the alternative press is a subset of them.

Environmental magazines, human rights publications and other media for social justice are mainly in the Gandhian line. The alternative press often engages in advocacy journalism and frequently promotes specific political views. In united states, there are a number of alternative newspapers such as the 'Village Voice' in New York, The 'Metro Times' in Detroit, the 'Boston Phoenix,' the 'Chicago Reader',

'Washington City Paper' and the 'Knoxville Voice,' etc.⁷⁴ In India Gandhi could give a common outlook and sense of direction to the newspapers in his time. Some such Gandhian values and influences still persist. Indian National congress and the freedom movement helped not only the growth of Gandhiji's publications, but also that of all the other national dailies. Their number has increased. Many newspapers in the regional languages sprang up. In Kerala, the Mathrubhumi was started as a part of the freedom struggle. It was the concerted effort of by eminent freedom fighters like K.Kalappan, K.P.Kesava Menon, K.Madhavan Nair, P.Ramunni Menon, Kuroor Neelakandan Namboothiripad, K.A.Damodara Menon etc....

'Vivekodayam' from Irinjalakkuda (1967)' Atmavidhya Kahalam' from Kozhikode by Vagbhadanantha Gurukkal, 'Jana Ranjini' from Kottayam.... Made their contributions to lead the society along the Gandhian path. Kuroor Neelakandan Namboothiripad started 'Lokamanayan' from Thrissoor (1920), 'Swaraj' from Kollam (1921), 'Al-Ameen' from Kozhikode by Muhamjmad Abdul Rahman sahib (1924), 'Yuvabharatham' from Palakkad, 'Malayala Rajyam' from Kollam 'Kerala Kesari', 'Swabhimani', 'Mahatma' and 'Navajivan' from Thrissoor by Amsi Narayana Pillai, etc. are some such Gandhian publications of that era. Kuroor Neelakandan Namboothiripad was arrested and jailed for six months accusing sedition on an editorial wrote in 'Lokamanyan'.

Small scale newspapers in Kerala, the most literate state of India are trying to raise regional issues. Though they are small in circulation wise, the service done by them is not small. Their vested interests are negligible. The advertisement giants do not disturb them. So they can expose the malpractices in the society than large scale news paper houses without fear of retaliation.

Today also there are some journalists who write in the Gandhian path. The rural editor of 'The Hindu', P. Sainath is one among them. He is giving reports from Indian villages. He was in partisan with the hungry million of villagers. (Daridra Narayanas). He recently published a book on these issues called 'Everybody loves a Good Drought. He led the mass media to the mass reality of rural India.

'Gandhi Marg', the journal of Gandhi peace foundation is a publication in the perfect Gandhian line. It is a high standard publication on Gandhian issues and vision. It's articles are accepted world wide reputation. It will not collect advertisements. It is published both in English and in Hindi.

Various Gandhian organizations, environmental movements and social fellowships purposefully avoid advertisements from their publications. The 'Prohibition' Magazine of Kerala Madhya Nirodhana Samiti is one among them. It is published from Ernakulam. The Inland and mini magazines in Kerala are the symbol of active young mind in the state. They have influence among the youth. They only collect minor contributions from the readers for publishing cost.

The 'Soochimukhi' and the 'Ankh' Published by famous environmental activist Johnsy in the state were noteworthy. They never collected advertisements. Their price was comparatively high. Even then they could attract the readers. 'Soochimukhi' was published from Kozhikode and 'Ankh' from Edatt. They shed some rays of hope in the Gandhian path.

Gandhi believed that a small group of people having firm faith in their mission can even change the course of history.⁷⁵ This belief helped Gandhi in all his attempts. The modern newspapers are growing day by day with a gigantic speed. Even then all attempts in the small scale are also relevant.

(iv) Professional Journalism and Gandhiji

Ours is an age of professional journalism. Each journalist is trying to show his professional excellence. Each publishing house is trying to make use of professional team work. We can not blame a professional approach as such. Professionalism has its own merits also. Even then Gandhiji was not an advocate of professional journalism. He himself admit this. "As for giving ideas, I have some originality. But writing is a by-product I propagate my ideas. Journalism is not my profession."⁷⁶ He also gave more importance to his actions than his writings. "What I have done will endure, not what I have said or written."⁷⁷ Gandhi had taken up journalism not for its sake but merely as an aid to what he had conceived to be his mission in life. "My mission is to teach by examples and precept under severe restraint the use of the matchless weapon of satyagraha which is a direct corollary of non violence and truth.... To be true to my faith, therefore, I may not write in anger or malice. I may not write idly. I may not write merely to excite passion."⁷⁸

In professional journalism, social commitment is ignored by and large. Gandhi considered journalism as a service means to the society. In his autobiography he has given expression to his views in some detail.⁷⁹ He was very much aware of the great power wedded by the news paper. "As an unchained torrent of water submerges whole countryside and devastate crops, an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy" - He warned. Gandhi explained his way of journalism truthfully: "The reader can have no idea of the restraint I have to exercise from week to week in the choice of topics and my vocabulary. It is a training for me. It enables me to peep into myself and to make discoveries of my weaknesses. Often my vanity dictates a smart expression of my anger a harsh adjective. It is a terrible ordeal but a fine exercise to remove these weeds".⁸⁰

Gandhi was never thought of achieving wage or profit from his journalism. In that sense he was not a working journalist in the new sense of the term. Even then he gave some great norms to the profession. "My writing cannot but be free from hatred towards any individual because it is my firm belief that it is love that sustains the earth."⁸¹ He wrote it as a base of his ethical stand. In any other profession, the violation of ethics may lead to debar from the profession. The profession of a doctor or an advocate is an example. But in the case of journalism, readers are the masters of all. If we strictly gave some ethical codes to the profession, it may destroy freedom of the press and freedom of speech and expression. Gandhiji also admits this truth.

Professional journalism was developed from the realization of the media owners that, it was necessary for the promotion of their business activities. As a result it became a tool of capitalists. Content wise competition overcomes all limits. As a result professional approach in every field of the newspaper industry flourished. The call of inner -voice disappeared. Journalists are trained. Technological advancement and professionalism decreased the moral self-control of the field.⁸² Professionalism now becoming a by-product of capital power. It gradually vanishes the small scale newspapers from the field. Also journalism is now degraded to like any other profession.

If we take the professional approach, the content of involvement on issues and matters will decrease. No news will touch the heart of the journalist. It is a fact that to a certain extent this is good. If a journalist become unconscious when seeing a disaster, he could not perform his duty well. There is a saying that 'generally speaking the press lives on disasters.' But the absolute untouched approach of professional journalists is not good for the society. They are not lotus leaves in the water. They are part and parcel of the society. As we saw

earlier, professionalism increases competition. A professional journalist is always competing with his colleagues and with other unprofessional journalists. Today journalism is led by liberalism. It is the only industry which directly related to democracy. As a result the importance of journalism is increasing in the society. Gandhi was not fully against to all these. Today a group of journalists are becoming careerists. To them money and higher positions are the only aim. It is unfortunate. Journalism is a different job. It has its own heights. Here we can see the beauty of the words of Gandhi. "There can be no room for untruth in my writings, because it is my unshakeable belief that there is no religion other than truth and because I am capable of rejecting aught obtained at the cost of truth."⁸³

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